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EXTENSION
SERVICE

Ten years of coopera-
tive extension work

1914-1924

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EXPERIMENT STATION FILE

22 TEN YEARS
OF COOPERATIVE
EXTENSION WORK
UNDER THE SMITH-LEVER ACT
MAY 8, 1914 ————— MAY 8, 1924.

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
E x t e n s i o n S e r v i c e
Washington, D. C.

TEN YEARS OF COOPERATIVE EXTENSION WORK
UNDER THE SMITH-LEVER ACT
May 8, 1914 - May 8, 1924.

On May 8, 1914, legislative action to establish a national system of extension work in agriculture and home economics was completed by the signing of the Smith-Lever Act by President Wilson. At the conclusion of the tenth year of cooperation between the Federal Government and the States in the conduct of extension work it seems fitting to review briefly what has been accomplished and to think for a moment of the future.

Although demonstration work had been under way for some 10 years in the South under the leadership of Dr. Seaman A. Knapp, and although various phases of extension work had developed in the different sections of the country, it was not until 1914 that the movement took on a united cooperative national character. The movement was given impetus by the report of President Roosevelt's Country Life Commission in February, 1909, and soon thereafter bills providing for Federal aid to extension work were introduced by Senator Doliver of Iowa, and Representative McLaughlin of Michigan. Other bills along similar lines were introduced from time to time but all of these failed of passage until 1914, when, under the leadership of Hon. Hoke Smith of Georgia, Chairman of the Senate Committee on Agriculture and Forestry, and Hon. A. F. Lever of South Carolina, Chairman of the House Committee on Agriculture, the Smith-Lever Act was finally passed.

The act is unique in Federal legislation. It was the first of a series of Federal acts which provides definitely for cooperation between the Federal and State governments in carrying on a common enterprise and permitting participation by counties, local governments, associations, and individuals.

At the time of the passage of the Smith-Lever Act there were more than 500 men agents and 200 women agents engaged in demonstration work in the South. More than 200 county agricultural agents also were at work in several of the Northern States. In the 10 years that have passed, the number of men agents in the United States has increased to 2,239. There are now 921 women agents, and 126 boys' and girls' club agents. As the work progressed the needs of the county extension workers for expert assistance in various lines, such as dairying, crop production, animal husbandry, nutrition, and home management, became apparent. There has now grown up a staff of about 800 extension specialists in the States, who aid the county workers in formulating their programs of work, give special assistance in the problems in their particular fields, and otherwise supplement the extension system. The county workers, specialists, and the administrative and supervisory forces make altogether nearly 4,500 people who are now engaged in carrying the gospel of better and more profitable farming, and healthier and happier homes to the people of the United States.

The original appropriation under the Smith-Lever Act was \$480,000, with provision for annual increases for eight years until the total reached the sum of \$4,580,000. In addition to this amount, \$1,300,000 is now appropriated by the Congress on the same basis as the Smith-Lever funds,

and a further appropriation of about \$1,300,000 is made for Farmers' Cooperative Demonstration Work. This makes the total Federal appropriation \$7,180,000, to which the States and local agencies have added approximately \$11,000,000, so that now between \$18,000,000 and \$19,000,000 are annually devoted to extension activities. One of the greatest tributes to the success of the movement is the fact that during the past three years of agricultural depression, while extension funds have not been materially increased, they have been maintained, and the losses in extension workers due to discontinuance of the work in certain counties have been more than made up by gains elsewhere.

With this large development the movement is still far from complete and there is much to which to look forward. There are still several hundred agricultural counties which have no men agents, and around 2,000 counties which have no women agents. These counties are not now receiving the full benefits of extension work, although something is being done in practically every county in the United States. Many of the more important agricultural counties have need for more than two agents. Much greater development of boys' and girls' clubs is needed, for in many respects this is the most effective extension field. The home demonstration work also needs much expansion. The building up of the extension force to double or more than double its present proportions must necessarily be a long-time job, but it is one toward which we should be looking and striving. One of the most hopeful signs of the times is the recent very large increase in local leaders of extension projects. The development of these local leaders is certain to result in not only better farming and more satisfactory home life, but a more intelligent and responsible citizenship.

On the occasion of the tenth anniversary of the signing of the Smith-Lever Act it seems fitting that we should have messages from the two men whose name it bears, and from Dr. A. C. True, under whom as Director of the States Relations Service, the provisions of the Act on the part of the Federal Government were carried out until the organization of the Department Extension Service, July 1, 1923.

Hon. Hoke Smith, former Senator from Georgia and Chairman of the Senate Committee on Agriculture and Forestry, now a practicing attorney in Washington, D. C., writes as follows:

Before the preparation of the Smith-Lever Act, providing for a system of extension work in agriculture and home economics, I had already had an opportunity of observing the value of farm demonstration, which was, to a considerable extent, being conducted in Georgia.

It gives me great pleasure to extend to you my hearty congratulations. You have contributed much to the improvement of rural conditions and to the increase and diversification of our agricultural products. You are serving a class of people who are the very backbone of our country.

Do not be discouraged by obstacles. Go on enthusiastically with your efforts. They will be crowned with success.

(Signed) HOKE SMITH.

Hon. A. F. Lever, for many years a representative from South Carolina and former Chairman of the House Committee on Agriculture, now President of the First Carolinas Joint Stock Land Bank at Columbia, South Carolina, sends this message to extension workers:

The signing of this act put into permanent form and on a permanent basis the work which had heretofore been carried on quite successfully under the inspiring genius and leadership of the late Dr. Seaman A. Knapp, who will fill a very large place in the agricultural history of this country, ranking along with Morrill, Hatch, Adams, and Nelson as the creative force of a great work.

I believe no single piece of legislation in the history of this country has done, or is doing, so much for the agriculture of the nation as is the Extension Act, and as the service grows older and the problems of agriculture become more and more complex, as they will, the provisions of this enactment are broad enough to permit the service to fit in with the conditions as they exist and to help solve the problems from day to day and year to year as they arise.

To the thousands and thousands who are engaged in this work in every State in the Union, I extend the greetings of one who spent many, many months in the preparation of this law, and who wishes, for each and every one continued and added success and happiness as life goes on.

(Signed) A. F. LEVER.

No man has had more to do with agricultural education, research, and extension in a national way than Dr. A. C. True. Doctor True, who is now engaged in writing a history of the development in these fields, sends greetings to extension workers in the following words:

The American system of cooperative agricultural extension work organized under the Smith-Lever Act is the culmination of a movement for the dissemination of agricultural knowledge which began in this country more than a century ago and was promoted by agricultural societies, schools and colleges, the agricultural and general press, and the Federal and State Departments of Agriculture.

The great merit of the law enacted by Congress under the wise leadership of Hon. Hoke Smith and Hon. Asbury F. Lever is that it has made possible the combination of all the useful factors in the extension work previously conducted by these various agencies and has brought into active cooperation the public and private organizations dealing with agricultural advancement, as well as great multitudes of men, women, and children living on American farms. It has also made extension work in agriculture and home economics a nation-wide part of our system of public education by uniting it permanently with the colleges endowed with national and State funds and giving it perennial sources of new knowledge through its close relations with the agricultural experiment stations and the research work of the United States Department of Agriculture.

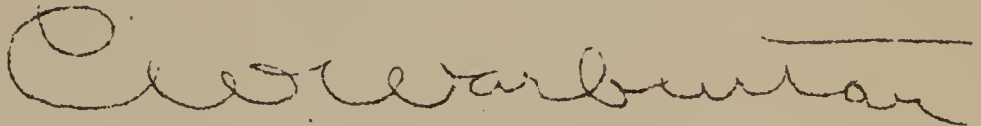
This system of practical education for farming people has stood the test of both war and peace, is reaching further than ever before and has, in ever increasing measure, the cordial support of the American public. The results achieved in the past decade have been very great and beneficial and should be a strong inspiration to even more devoted and successful service by all who are in any way connected with this great enterprise.

(Signed) A. C. TRUE.

I think we can look back on these ten years of cooperative extension work with much satisfaction and with the knowledge that real progress has been made, and I feel that we can look forward confidently to bigger and better things during the years to come.

With best wishes for your success, I am,

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "C. W. Warburton". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned above the printed name and title.

C. W. WARBURTON
Director of Extension Work.

May 8, 1924.

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ct. May 8, 1914-May 8, 1924

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